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To be frank, this will be the fourth or fifth time I've read Romeo and Juliet; and after reading it three times in my freshmen year of High school, I was a bit sick of the play. However, this time around I really tried to wrap my head





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around the text from a new perspective. This is mostly because I know Stratford is quite good at giving a unique or new performance of these classics, such as their take on Ophelia and Laertes during the Gala last Fall during which Ophelia is treated as an adult. We tend to think of the fourteen





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year old women in Shakespeare's plays as children, but actually, they more likely would have been considered adults. Soon, I began to realize that of all the characters in the play, Juliet is the most responsible and proactive, and the tragedy of Romeo and Juliet stems from the men in her life not

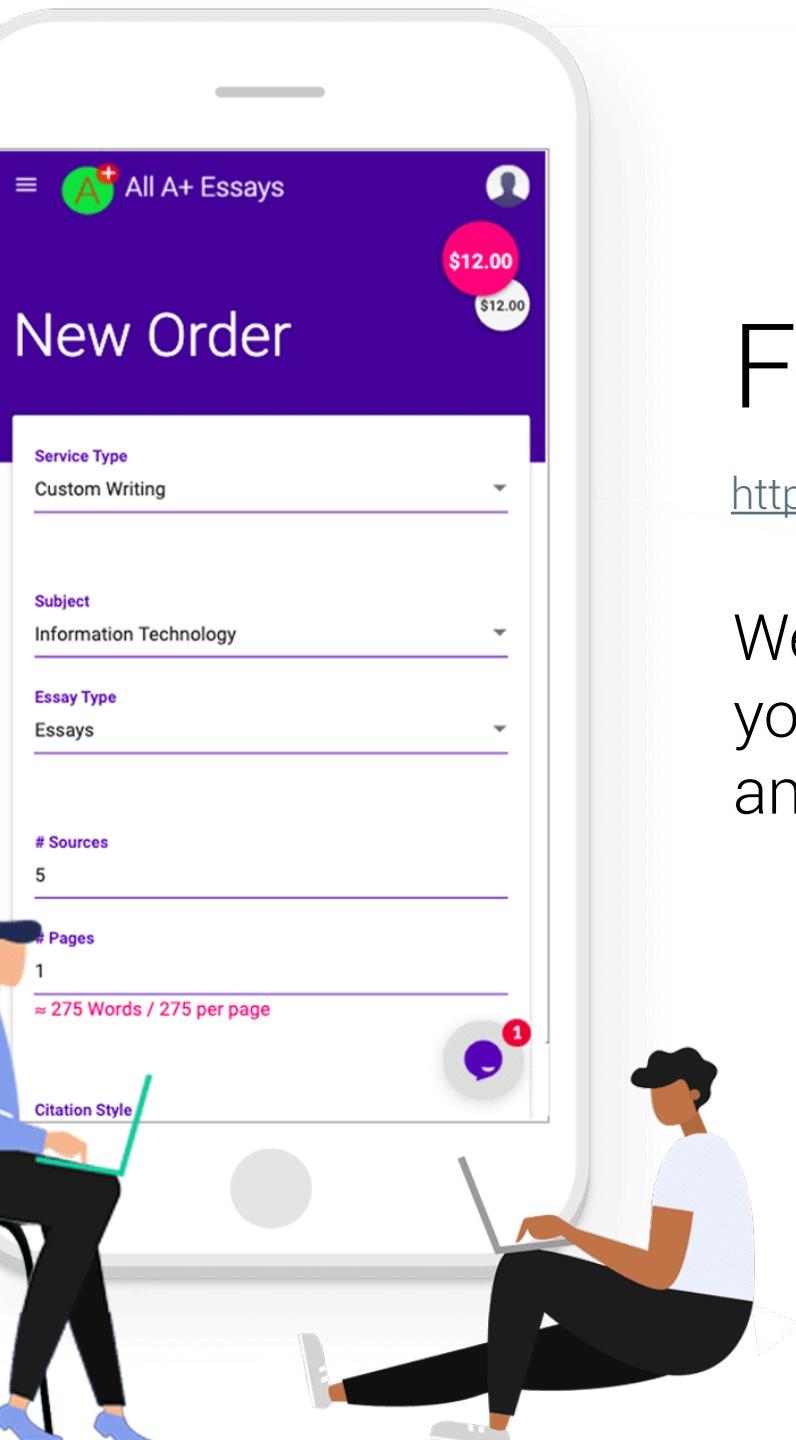




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behaving like they are supposed to. That is to say, the woe of Juliet and her Romeo is born by the misbehavior of the play's male characters, such as Romeo and Capulet. As a fourteen year old noble woman, Juliet's responsibility was to marry a noble man that would bring prosperity and honor to her

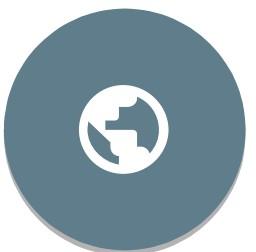




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enemies to peace, Profaners of this neighbor-stained steel—Will they not hear?—What ho! You men, you beasts, That quench the fire of your pernicious rage With purple fountains issuing from your veins: On pain of torture, from those bloody hands Throw your mistempered weapons to the ground, And hear the





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sentence of your movèd prince.Three civil brawls bred of an airy  
wordBy thee, old Capulet, and Montague,Have thrice disturbed  
the quiet of our streetsAnd made Verona's ancient citizensCast  
by their grave-beseeming ornamentsTo wield old partisans in  
hands as old,Cankered with peace, to part your





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cankered hate.If ever you disturb our streets again,Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace.For this time all the rest depart away.You, Capulet, shall go along with me,And, Montague, come you this afternoonTo know our farther pleasure in this case,To old Free-town, our common judgment-

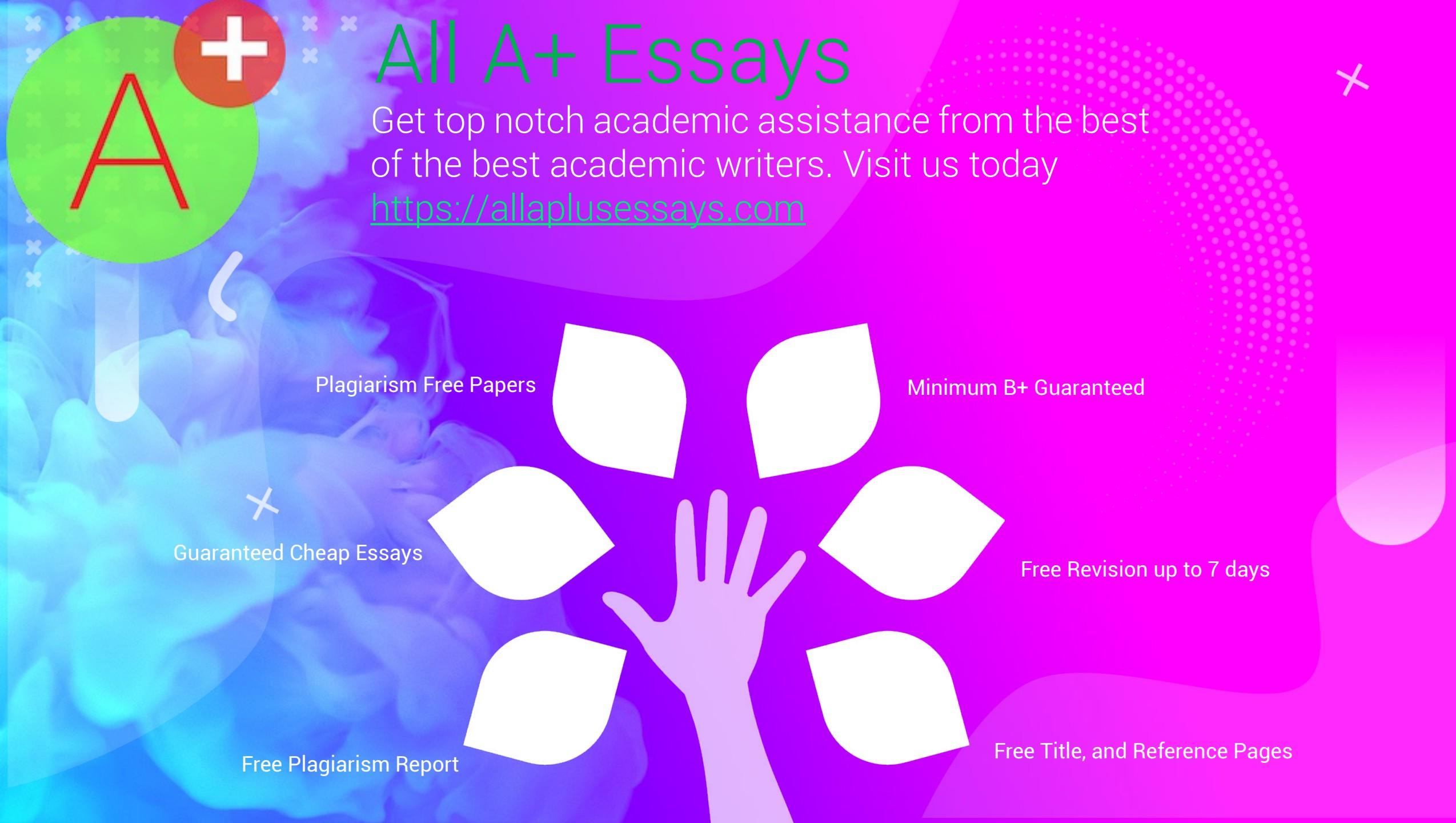




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place. Once more, on pain of death, all men depart. Thus, her marrying Paris would mean a good match of prosperity and honor for her house, but her marriage to Romeo is a good match of peace and alliance for Verona, her prince, as well as a match of prosperity and honor for her house. Therefore,





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woman. In our culture, we see often her as a defiant child, and perhaps she has become an example of why should obey your parents and not run off to get married ("Don't have sex because you will get pregnant and die"- Meangirls). However, Juliet isn't simply defiant child going against her father's





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wishes for the sake of lust and sin. She marries the heir of a house equal to her own, and there is an emphasis on marry here because she doesn't allow for anything sinful to happen without the consent of the church. She has witnesses who are trusted by her household, as her maid is trusted with her





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life by her parents. Also, she might be aware that her father will allow her to choose her husband. After all, she discusses her choice with her maid in act 2, scene 5. Furthermore, her actions are more in line with society's expectations for her, not just because her marriage ends a costly blood



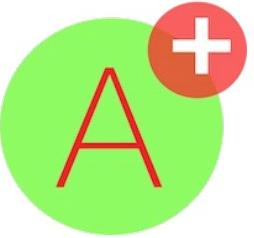


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feud, but because as far as she knows her father has been selfishly keeping her unmarried. In Act 1, Scene 2, 6-19 Paris and Capulet discuss the former's request to marry the not quite fourteen year old Juliet. Capulet wants to keep her from marrying for at least two more years, while Paris claims



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sentimental. The impression of Capulet given is of a man who may have lost a child once and isn't eager to give up another, even if it is his duty as her father to do so. Moreover, he claims "My will to her consent is but a part; / And she agree, within her scope of choice / Lies my consent and fair





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according voice" (1.2.17-19). This turns out to be a lie, because he intends to force Juliet to marry Paris later in the play. If Capulet had kept his word that Juliet's marriage would be to a husband of her choice, she wouldn't have needed to fake her own death in order to avoid the sin of breaking





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her marriage vows to Romeo, and much of the woe of Juliet and her Romeo would have been avoided. I say much of the woe, because of course, Capulet is not responsible for Romeo's actions in the killing of Tybalt. Romeo is aware of his new relationship with the Capulets, and Tybalt was not, but both



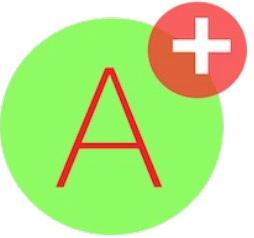


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were aware of the Prince's threat. Now married, Romeo would be aware that he was expected to behave with more honor and dignity than as a single son and heir, meaning he should have left Tybalt's punishment to the Prince. This was especially so morally speaking, because now Romeo has shed his own



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unlawful behavior, and Capulet's selfishness counter Juliet's moral and responsible actions that should have resulted in prosperity and peace for her house and her city, but instead dissolved into disastrous death. Thus, Juliet is not some spoiled, immature child who defies her parents to the point





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of ruin, but instead, is an intelligent and aware noble woman who did as much as she could to make her world better within the confines of her status, age, and gender. Attachments  
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